

I Might Seem Wild by lucdarling

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Summary:

Billy didn't plan on breaking down outside of town between Riverdale and Greendale, not that anyone ever plans on their car breaking down on a cross-country road trip.

He reopens the mechanic's garage on the edge of town, props up the local bar after work and then a mechanic's apprentice finds him, to his surprise.

I Might Seem Wild

Author's Note:

Title from lyrics of Zella Day's "Mustang Kids" which played in the pilot of Riverdale. I didn't think I'd be writing for this maple syrup murder town ever again and yet here we are! The timelines don't matter so enjoy and please leave a comment.

Billy didn't plan on breaking down outside of town between Riverdale and Greendale, not that anyone ever plans on their car breaking down on a cross-country road trip. It was only a toss of the coin that had him heading here and not the sister-town across the river.

He opens the garage on the edge of town, the one that's fallen into disrepair but has a working hydraulic lift still. There's an apartment above it and Billy is thankful, certainly won't miss the motel one step up from a roach, with its overbleached sheets even if the smell of smoke baked into the peeling wallpaper was familiar. Billy takes out an ad in the little town paper, grits his teeth as he counts words and forks over what isn't quite the last of his cash. He needs some way of making some money to continue the impromptu road trip around the good ol' US of A, seeing the sights and meeting people. It fulfills something in him after years of healing and government conspiracy and trauma upon trauma.

If Billy's honest, he expects to be handling Ford sedans off the factory floor, maybe that obnoxious limo he sees on occasion around town. Instead, he ends up working on bikes. A lot of bikes, the same ones he sees propped up outside at all hours of the night at the White Wyrms.

The name of the place makes Billy wrinkle his nose, a little too close to the slurs his father liked to toss around once he was liquored up. Billy might have taken a few years to learn that a lot of the world didn't feel the same but he doesn't make the same mistake twice.

The Wyrms pull a good draft though, and there isn't another bar in

this maple town. Even Billy gets tired of drinking alone, too much time to think when it's just himself and the crappy television he picked up on the side of the road.

"You new around here?" The bartender, a pink haired girl who looks younger than the last time he saw Max, slides a glass across the sticky counter.

"Just moved," Billy shrugs even though he's been in town almost a month and ordered from the same bartender last night. She smiles and it isn't friendly.

"Piece of advice? There's two kinds of people in this town. You can only be neutral for so long around here."

Billy snorts into the foam. "Did I wander into West Side Story, maybe Rizzo and the Pink Ladies are gonna waltz in for a turn at the jukebox?" He nods his head toward the music player from yesteryear.

The bartender looks confused and Billy wonders just how isolated this town is, wishes for the first time his ride hadn't broken down on the bridge between towns. Maybe he should have hitched into Greendale instead but Billy's gut screamed at him when he took a step down that path. He's listened to his gut after everything in the Midwest.

"There's a 1950s style diner on the other end of town," Billy explains.

The woman curls her lip, picks up a clean rag to start wiping down glassware. "Pop's is neutral ground but the whole town leans hard into the aesthetic."

Billy sighs "I just want to make enough money and I'll be on my way." At least the garage was equipped with tools he was familiar with. New York is the opposite end from California which makes it unlikely anyone will look for him here.

"What kind of job are you interested in?" A voice breaks into his thoughts. A leather-clad arm drops onto Billy's shoulders and he shakes it off, hand curling around his empty glass to use as a bludgeon if necessary.

"I already bought the mechanic's place for a song down the street," Billy says, friendly. He's learned to catch more with honey and charm than anger. "Put an ad in the paper, no fish yet. You ever want me to take a look at some of those bikes outside, just let me know. Could probably give a discount, considering you keep me in beer."

The man's dark eyes gleam. "We usually do most of our own repairs around here but there's something in you I think I like."

Billy's lips thin at the quick judgment. "You don't know a thing about me."

"I know you're drinking in my bar," the man counters and motions for two more beers. "FP Jones, de facto leader of the Serpents."

"Sounds like a gang," Billy comments. He doesn't touch his fresh pour until FP sips at his. Old habits die hard and he's picked up a lot on the road.

"Some might call us that." FP says idly. His voice is a study in cautiousness and Billy's muscles tense. "I'm just looking for a way to provide for my kids. You're a man who looks like you know a thing or two about survival."

"Yeah, life of hard knocks." Billy says dryly. "You planning to send work my way? If not, I can just as well drink myself to sleep at home." He takes a drink, no use in refusing free beer.

"Hey now, I don't mean to bore you," FP chuckles and it almost sounds sincere. "Just seems like we might have some things in common."

Billy remains silent. He left the past behind him for a reason.

"You look like a man who knows a thing or two about loss."

"Kids, huh?" Billy says. Every father he's met, his own the exception, loves to brag. FP is no different until he's interrupted by another leather jacket, whispering in his ear.

"Been nice to chat, Billy." FP says, slapping a hand on the counter between them. Billy doesn't flinch anymore at power plays. He

doesn't bother to ask how FP learned his name. A gang leader in a town this small probably knows near everyone. "I'll send some work your way, the least I can do with you propping up my bar every night this week."

Billy salutes him with a now empty glass and another smirk.

He's surprised when FP's word turns out to be good a few days later. Billy does a remarkable number of oil changes on what seems like every bike in the South Side. That's something Billy is still wrapping his head around, this division between the parts of town. He hasn't seen anything like it when there aren't gang colors involved.

Pop's does have a damn good chocolate shake, he admits to himself, and slowly Billy settles into the slower pace of life. He stays outside the Serpent wars and whatever's brewing with the too rich Lodge family. He's got a place to lay his head, somewhat steady work and he sets his own hours.

Billy is doing alright for himself on the other side of thirty.

He isn't expecting to wake up one morning and find another person in the bay, empty except the Ford Pinto he's praying doesn't blow up in his face as he replaces the fuel line. Literally.

"The hell you think you're doing?" Billy barks, storming towards the stranger. If they've put something out of place or worse in their pockets, he's going to make them regret it.

"Cool it, gramps. Just wanted to see what you were up to. Used to spend a lot of time here." The kid answers, spinning around and keeping her arms loose at her sides. It's the ass crack of dawn and something in her stance, too-old eyes in a young face, make him pause before throwing her out. She cocks her hip as he stares and Billy wonders if all teenage girls go to some sort of class to learn that look; he remembers Max trotting out the same expression.

"You old enough to drink?"

"Never stopped me before."

Billy pours them both some coffee into chipped mugs and like that,

he's got an apprentice mechanic in Jellybean Jones.

He meets her older sibling, Jughead, a few days later. He doesn't spend a lot of time in the garage, prefers the office with its cranky a-c and his laptop screen that he doesn't show anyone.

Billy lets him be, like recognizes like. Jughead seems caught between his friends group and their ongoing drama of the week and his true desire to work on the next great American novel, neither of which he can do at home though FP's been seen less at the bar as of late so Billy hopes he's at home with his kids. He doubts it though, and doesn't waste his breath asking either of the Jones men.

Billy never planned on staying in Riverdale past the amount of time it took to scrape up enough for a ride out of town but watching the Jones siblings interact reminds him of better days. He sends Max a postcard with a phone number before he can regret it or squash the kernel of hope in his chest.

The calendar flips from spring to summer and it's July 4th all over again.

Billy closes up shop and spends the day at Sweetwater River with a six pack. He puts in foam earplugs when dusk falls and falls asleep in the backseat of the muscle car he's fixing up. It's not another Camaro, he won't ever be able to drive one of those again, but Billy thinks he might paint this one blue as a point of connection to what once was. He can't go back but still carries the lessons with him, sees them every day when he looks in the mirror.

The phone rings when he gets back to the garage, juggling the keys left in the box overnight and his steaming to-go cup of coffee from Pop's.

"Hargrove's Wheels, what's wrong with your vehicle?"

"I don't have one," Max answers and Billy laughs. "Think you could help me out?"

"Yeah shitbird," he responds, checking his watch. It's 11AM and the garage is closed in observance of the national holiday yesterday. He

has all the time for her today. “How soon can you get to New York?
It’d be nice to see you again.”